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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BRUSSELS 001293

SIPDIS

FOR THE SECRETARY FROM AMBASSADOR GUTMAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/24/2019

TAGS: PREL PGOV BE

SUBJECT: THE SECRETARY'S MEETING WITH BELGIAN FOREIGN  
MINISTER YVES LETERME AT UNGA

Classified By: DCM Wayne Bush, reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶11. (SBU) SUMMARY: Madame Secretary, In your first meeting with Belgian Foreign Minister (former Primer Minister) Yves Leterme in New York, Leterme is likely to focus on the lack of direct Belgian participation in the G-20, and perhaps be rather forceful in his manner. You should express appreciation for Belgium's decision to accept a Guantanamo detainee, and encourage further Belgian steps on this issue. The Belgians have made significant military and development assistance commitments to Afghanistan through the end of ¶2010. Leterme is also likely to raise the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Belgium was elected with us to the Human Rights Council this year, and assumes the EU Presidency in the second half of 2010. Suggested talking points appear at para. 9. END SUMMARY.

G-20

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¶12. (SBU) As the world's 18th largest economy, the Belgians are concerned and somewhat upset that they, like a number of similarly sized EU economies, do not participate directly in the G-20, which has become a primary vehicle for international consultation on the global financial and economic crisis. Belgium is only represented indirectly in the G-20 by the EU. The Belgians' concern is driven by their perception that decisions are made between the U.S. and the G-20 that directly affect their interests, without a Belgian seat at the table. Belgian officials have raised their concerns with me and with aides to Michael Froman of the NEC/NSC. Leterme himself raised the issue with Senators Shelby and Cornyn when they visited Brussels in August.

¶13. (SBU) In response to the Belgian concerns, we have highlighted the opportunity for Belgium, given our long history as allies, to provide leadership in other ways, including considering the resettlement of additional Guantanamo detainees and greater public/rhetorical support for NATO/ISAF efforts in Afghanistan. Although the Belgians will never have the manpower or the money of larger European countries, Belgium could quickly step to the front of the pack on issues that don't require such material resources. The Belgians have shown at least academic interest in the concept.

Guantanamo

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¶14. (SBU) The Belgians have recently agreed to accept for resettlement one Guantanamo detainee who is subject to a release order. We are currently working with the Belgians to finalize details of the transfer which should occur in the near future. We are working to resolve Belgian concerns on certain DoD procedures for conducting the transfer. We have also raised the importance of Belgium accepting two other detainees, Tunisian nationals, who have been convicted in

Belgian courts. The Belgian government has indicated its openness to considering these cases through judicial rather than political channels. My assessment is that if the ongoing efforts are concluded without significant negative public reaction, we will be in a position to pursue the possibility of a significant additional Belgian effort.

Afghanistan

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15. (C) Belgium has provided substantial support for NATO/ISAF efforts in Afghanistan, including providing two Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams in Kunduz, participating in a German-led Provincial Reconstruction team, deploying six F-16s to Kandahar, and providing security for Kabul's international airport. In addition, Belgium has promised \$12 million in development assistance to Afghanistan for each of the next two years. The government has committed to maintaining this level of effort through the end of Belgium's prospective EU presidency in the latter half of 2010. We believe that a greater civilian effort by Belgium is possible. Leterme himself has acknowledged this possibility.

Africa and the Democratic Republic of the Congo

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6.(SBU) The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) remains one of Belgium's top foreign policy concerns. During your last meeting with previous Belgian FM De Gucht, you offered to cooperate with Belgium in identifying ways to strengthen

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the DRC military to address the security crisis. With DeGucht's departure and Leterme's arrival, the Foreign Ministry is reviewing its approach (though not fundamental policy) on the DRC, and will decide shortly whether to send a team to Washington to seek further discussions on this topic with the State Department and DoD. A Belgian ship seized by pirates in the Indian Ocean and held off the coast of Somalia was freed earlier this year following negotiations by the ship's insurers and a reported ransom payment. The Belgian military provides protective detachments for ships on a fee basis, and Belgium will provide a ship to Atalanta, the EU anti-piracy mission.

EU Presidency/Human Rights Council

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17. (SBU) Belgium assumes the EU Presidency July 1, 2010 and will becomend per Belgiale of Forti to Q 210, and to consider providing more civilian ass)stance to both Afghanistan and Pakistan. Udate on reported U.S. Afghanistan policy reviQw.

-- We are grateful for Belgium's decisiontant for Belgium to also accept two Tunisian nationals in Guantanamo who have been convicted in Belgium. We believe therQ is scope for Belgium to show leadership on tQe resettlement of detainees in ways the United States would deeply appreciate.

-- We look frward to continued close cooperation with Belgium to promote our shared interests via the Human Rights Council.

-- Congratulate Belgium on its prospective EU Presidency, and ask about Belgium's priorities for its presidency.

-- Brief on your recent visit to Africa and welcome expanding our dialogue with Belgium on Africa. Appreciate continued close consultation of our envoys concerning security, human rights and conflict resolution in the Great Lakes region of Central Africa. Acknowledge Belgium's commitment to combating piracy.

BUSH

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